

SC008575

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Full inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

This children's home is run by a charitable organisation and provides care for up to five children who may have physical disabilities and/or learning disabilities. The home provides short-term breaks, together with long-term placements for a small number of children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 2016.

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 February 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 13 October 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
13/10/2021	Full	Good
04/12/2019	Full	Good
08/01/2019	Full	Good
29/11/2017	Full	Good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Planning for children who access the short-breaks service is carefully considered in line with the children's individual needs. In preparation for short breaks, assessments are completed and visits to the home are supported. Children have a minimum of three visits to the home before they come to stay. Parents speak highly about the process and one child's parent said, 'I can't praise them enough. It is extraordinary the work they complete. It is so detailed, and every eventuality is covered.'

Children are supported to build positive, trusting and secure relationships with the staff who care for them. Staff are nurturing in their approach and spend quality time with children and know them well. Staff understand the individual needs of each child and know how best to support them.

Staff ensure that children's well-being is at the centre of their practice. Children are provided with opportunities to take part in a wide variety of experiences and activities that are individual to their needs. Children's achievements are recognised, celebrated and appropriately rewarded.

Staff are passionate about their work. They ensure that all children have positive experiences and are particularly proud of the progress that they make. One child has been helped to lose a significant amount of weight. As a result, the child's health and quality of life have significantly improved. Recently, the child's parent told staff that the child had enjoyed a zipline adventure and that their 'personality has returned'.

Staff have an excellent understanding of each child's preferred communication method and any aids that they may use. Children are supported to develop their communication, and the staff regularly liaise with schoolteachers to ensure that their approach is consistent with school. As a result, children are progressing and developing with their communication. One child can now confidently order lunch at school independently, using a communication device. The child can also ask friends what they would also like to eat.

Education in the home is promoted. All children who live in the home attend school and are making good progress from their starting points. Those who access the short-breaks service are also supported by staff to work towards their educational targets, and staff regularly attend meetings about the children's education.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

When children have displayed behaviours of concern, these are recorded in an incident report. The records are detailed and provide a clear insight into the events that occurred and how staff managed the incident. Incidents have been managed

appropriately and have been reviewed by the manager. This ensures that the manager has full oversight and can identify any possible learning outcomes to support the development of staff.

Investigations into allegations or suspicions of abuse are shared with the appropriate agencies and are handled fairly, quickly and in line with statutory guidance. When investigations take place, these are completed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager. Investigation reports are completed. They are thorough and provide clear outcomes, including any identified learning points.

Medication storage and recording systems are effective. Discrepancies around medication are appropriately managed. When alerted to a medication error, the manager responded proactively. The manager completed an internal investigation and was able to identify learning outcomes. A clear action plan was implemented to reduce the likelihood of further medication errors.

Staff ensure that a thorough, structured handover meeting takes place every day. The meetings are led by experienced, qualified and knowledgeable staff. The staff use the meetings to pass on information from the previous day. They also hand over medication and complete medication audits. The staff use the meetings as an opportunity to plan each day effectively and ensure that children's needs are met.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The registered manager is experienced, suitably qualified, passionate and child-centred. She leads a stable and consistent staff team and is supported by an experienced assistant manager and an experienced team of senior support workers. Those who are in leadership roles share the same vision and ethos as the manager.

The manager ensures that supervisions take place regularly and in line with the home's statement of purpose. Staff are provided with opportunities to reflect on their practice and the care that they provide to children. Appraisals take place annually. These are self-reflective and provide feedback on performance from the manager. However, appraisals do not contain feedback from children and professionals.

During the previous inspection, the manager and staff were supporting one young person who had turned 18 to prepare for a move into an adult provision. However, a significant amount of time has passed, the plan is still ongoing and a suitable placement is yet to be identified. Although the manager has challenged the local authority, this has not been effective. As a result, this young person continues to live in the children's home and their opportunities to live more independently are limited. The manager has not fully considered the risks or effects associated with a young adult living in a children's home. It is unclear how this risk is managed or what strategies are in place to support the children and the young adult living in the home.

An assessment that considers risks associated with the location of the home is in place and up to date. However, the manager has not consulted with relevant agencies, such as the police in the local community, to obtain their views. The manager did recognise this during the inspection and shared the report with the local policing team to seek their views.

The manager ensures that children who live permanently in the home have up-to-date plans in place from the local authority. The plans are used to inform their internal care plans, which are detailed and child-friendly. However, not all children who access the short-breaks service have a local authority plan in place.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The care planning standard is that children— receive effectively planned care in or through the children's home; and have a positive experience of arriving at or moving on from the home. In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure— that arrangements are in place to— manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; that each child's relevant plans are followed. (Regulation (14)(a)(b) (2)(b)(ii)(iii)(c)) In particular, the registered person must ensure that when children are being supported to prepare to move into adult care, the planning for this is effective. If there are any delays in the transition process, this must be appropriately challenged and, where appropriate, the registered person must escalate concerns to the relevant agencies. Also, the registered person must ensure that when children access the short-breaks service, there are clear care plans in place from the child's local authority.	16 March 2023
The protection of children standard is that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.	16 March 2023

In particular, the standard in paragraph (1) requires the registered person to ensure—

that staff—

assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child.

(Regulation 12 (1) (2)(a)(i))

In particular, the registered person must ensure that when a child turns 18 and continues to live in the home, there must be a clear and robust risk management plan in place which is regularly reviewed.

Recommendations

- The registered person should include the views of the children and external professionals when carrying out appraisals with staff. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 61, paragraph 13.5)
- The registered person should ensure that when conducting a review of the premises, they must consult and consider the views of relevant people. ('Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 64, paragraph 15.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people, using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards'.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC008575

Provision sub-type: Children's home

Registered provider: The Together Trust

Registered provider address: The Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle SK8 1JE

Responsible individual: Jill Sheldrake

Registered manager: Helen Marston

Inspector

Kimmy Feeley, Social Care Inspector

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